

Shawsheen River Restoration Feasibility Study

Project Update: April 2008

What's Up—An exciting new project to restore and improve the ecosystem of the Shawsheen River, while enhancing its value to the communities of its watershed. The restoration is sponsored by a partnership of local groups, non-profit organizations and government agencies. Our first step is to complete a restoration feasibility study—an engineering and environmental study focusing on three dams in Andover, Mass., which will identify solutions for the environment and the community.

The Shawsheen—The Shawsheen River flows 25 miles through northeastern Massachusetts, from its headwaters in historic Concord and Lexington to the city of Lawrence, where it joins the Merrimack River on its route to the sea. Along its course, the Shawsheen flows through wetlands and forests, past farms and subdivisions, through historic mill villages and bustling downtowns. The Shawsheen River's watershed or drainage basin is nearly 80 square miles in area, located in 12 Massachusetts cities and towns, including Hanscom Air Force Base. About 250,000 people live in the Shawsheen River watershed.



Shawsheen River in downtown Andover

Why Restore?—Like most New England rivers, the Shawsheen was dammed for water power during the 19th century. The dams degraded the environment of the Shawsheen River in many ways. Dams harm water quality and habitat for many species of native fish and wildlife—for example, by preventing migratory fish from reaching historic spawning grounds. River herring, shad and salmon swim up the Merrimack River from the sea, but can no longer pass up the Shawsheen. Dams create problems for communities as well--exacerbating property flooding, causing potential safety hazards, and creating the need for costly inspection and maintenance. The Shawsheen dams no longer serve their original purposes, yet they continue to harm the river ecosystem while creating economic costs for the community.

Feasibility Study—Today, there are three dams on the Shawsheen, all in Andover. In downstream order, they're Ballardvale Dam, Marland Place Dam (also called Stevens Street Dam), and Balmoral Dam. The feasibility study will examine options for removing or modifying the dams—to re-establish a free-flowing river and, with it, a native river ecosystem that provides

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greater environmental, recreational and economic value to the communities of the watershed. Beyond restoring habitat for fish and wildlife, our goals include improving boating and pedestrian access to the river, and reducing property flooding. The feasibility study will use on-site surveys and computer modeling to gain a better understanding of the Shawsheen River, in order to develop effective and practical restoration solutions. We expect to complete the feasibility study in fall, 2008, and then intend to undertake engineering, design, permitting and construction of the restoration.

Costs & Funding—The feasibility study is projected to cost about \$125,000. To date we've secured about \$65,000 through a combination of state and federal sources. The project partners are actively seeking state, federal and private funds to complete the study. Our initial projection of construction costs is \$500,000; however, the feasibility study will develop more accurate cost estimates for this phase of the restoration. The partners are seeking funding commitments for construction, as well.



Marland Place Dam in Andover

Restoration Partners—Town of Andover—U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service—Mass. Riverways Program—Mass. Division of Fish & Wildlife—Mass. Division of Marine Fisheries—Shawsheen River Watershed Association—Atria Senior Living—Shawsheen Rubber—Shawsheen Realty LLC—Balmoral Condo Association—Tactitian Corporation—American Rivers—National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration—Center for Ecosystem Restoration—Earth Island Institute.

Get Involved!—We're committed to working with the communities of the watershed at each step in the restoration process—we welcome your comments, concerns and ideas. We hope to hear from neighbors, businesses, community groups and local government—anyone with an interest in this special place and this exceptional river. Over the course of the next year, we'll host several public meetings to discuss the restoration, asking the community to participate in shaping the project.

Find Out More—Check out our website at www.ecorestoration.org/shawsheen for project updates, volunteer opportunities, meeting notices and more!

Or call: Tom Ardito, Center for Ecosystem Restoration, (401) 575-6109.

Thank You!

www.ecorestoration.org/shawsheen